

Unreeling Yippee Culture through the Lens of Amitav Gosh's the *Golden Gate*

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Abstract

The present paper explores the socio-cultural slant of Yippie culture as portrayed in Vikram Seth's *The Golden Gate*. The novel portrays every character as a member of society, and these individuals realistically convey today's concerns and challenges. They emphasize earning more money to enjoy a contemporary life, but they fail to spend time with their family. The author explains the reasons for the divorce and aloofness straightforwardly. He demonstrates that the contemporary man is obsessed with sophisticated living. He may get addicted to contemporary technologies such as the iPhone, iPad, internet, and other ultra-modern devices, as well as a lavish lifestyle. This desire for a more refined lifestyle causes them to lose touch with their family, and as a result, they wind up sitting alone without their loved ones. The novel also throws the light on homosexuality, nuclear weapons, parties, divorce, answering machines, advertisement culture, and restaurant culture, perfectly portraying the Yuppie socio-culture in California.

Key Words: Yippie culture, LGBT, restaurant culture, advertisement culture

The *Golden Gate*, written by Vikram Seth, is set in the American ethos. Seth might be regarded as a global explorer who began his voyage from the local traditions of India, encountered the ways of life in England, China, and America, and made the entire planet his home as a result of his voyage to the west. With the admiration and empathy of a humanist, he works with multi-culture. This book covers emotional love, LGBT concerns, sadness, frustration, nuclear weapons, and his characters' search for self-acceptance. Seth depicts the novel's backdrop environment as the San Francisco area. His experiences in San Francisco have influenced him to show the lives of ordinary Americans in a detailed and realistic manner. In his work *The Golden Gate*, he depicts the lives of Yuppies, city officials, craftspeople, and ordinary people.

Youth from all over the globe who come to work in Californian urban areas with high salaries and a high standard of life is called yuppies. Young people prefer modern lifestyles over traditional lifestyles. Thus the desire to untangle some of their traditional ties and live their lives as they choose. These young people who have established in metropolitan regions and have decent jobs want to

celebrate their lives; therefore, they participate in traditional events. Because of their multi-cultural upbringing, some people may lose touch with their traditional and cultural origins. Thus, the socio-culture of young people is given with current requirements, whether deliberately or unconsciously. The novel's youthful protagonists are the embodiments of the twentieth century. They are always involved in their official duties, have all the latest technology, and proudly wear their official identification cards around their necks like a garland. Their food, culture, language, and way of life represent California's contemporary civilization.

The lives of yuppies have been extensively studied by the demographic profile, which exposes the Yuppies' psyche and the reasons behind their attitudes. Vikram Seth, who experienced the yuppies' lifestyle and socio-cultural status firsthand in the big metropolis of San Francisco, was able to provide a realistic representation of American socio-cultural life in his novel *The Golden Gate*. Vikram Seth's practical expertise touches on all imaginable subjects in this work. He portrays a genuine picture of the Roman Catholic Church and its social action and homosexual and bisexual people's sorrows and the struggle of craftspeople. He has vividly shown the lives of young American people, including their hopes, fears, and successes. The fantastic and

realistic depictions of San Francisco allow the reader to glimpse the faraway place through the author's eyes.

"... it was not his detachment but rather his love for California that was the most valuable to him in writing the book ... One cannot come with a cold and objective eye from outside and then write with affection about a place. One must have lived in that place and not just observed for years." (135)

During the 1980s, San Francisco became a significant crossroads in North America. Young people worldwide want to pursue higher education in California, and India has sent its young blooms to bloom there as well. Seth had attended Oxford and Stanford after completing his studies in India. Seth explains why California was chosen as the setting for his novel *The Golden Gate*:

*"I thought, oh my God, thick-headed beach boys and no intellectual conversations. Nevertheless, I met people who were both very intelligent and interested in things of the mind and who would think nothing about teaching you to swim butterfly. For me, it was like a revelation wonderfully. That is why *The Golden Gate*, in a way, for all its tragedy, is a happy book." (qtd. in Knorr 40)*

The themes of alienation, dissatisfaction, and isolation addressed in *The Golden Gate* are fundamental aspects of current American culture. In this work, Vikram Seth examines American society, its characteristics, rituals, customs, level of life, people's psyches, and, in particular, the gay-straight alliance in Western nations. Sentiment and affection

are not as sacred in Western social structures as in India.

The narrator describes California's socio-cultural life when civilization evolves into a hypermodern city. The city's ethos has shifted due to the present trend, and individuals are beginning to conduct their lives according to modern ethnicity. People value social concerns such as housewarming ceremonies, art exhibitions, and lavish dinners. In one way or another, all of the characters in the narrative are involved in the activities mentioned above.

In this work, Vikram Seth depicts cultural hybrids, restaurant culture, advertisement culture, music culture, art culture, ethnicity, and nuclear weapon culture. The author uses these to highlight current difficulties that the youthful society is dealing with. Multiculturalism and cultural hybridity make both men and women victims. A man without a familial solid or cultural history may not adhere to specific standards or traditions. He is free to live his life as he pleases, yet he cannot integrate into society.

Seth progresses the plot at a rapid rate. The novel begins in September and ends in November of the following year. The narrative is only a little more than a year long from start to finish. Seth uses San Francisco as the scene for the novel and depicts the grape estate run by Mr and Mrs Dorati and the olive-picking sequences set in the countryside to emphasize the importance of nature. Seth's time motif fits in wonderfully with this scenario as well. His upbringing in San Francisco's congested neighbourhoods allowed him to represent people's lives in minute detail. He successfully pours life into the Yuppies' lives and the lives of city officials, specialists, and ordinary people.

Because multi-cultural individuals live there, pure American ethnicity cannot be traced in this tale. The majority of the characters in *The Golden Gate* come from outside America. Phil is a Jew; Janet is a third-generation Japanese immigrant; Elizabeth, Ed, and Dorati are Italian immigrants. The protagonists battle to live between faith and science between two opposing concepts: faith and science. This work addresses generational difficulties, and the author hopes to expose the trustworthy source of young people's pains through this notion. All of the youthful characters are in their twenties and thirties. These

people must adopt California's socio-culture, practice their professions according to their abilities, and abandon a traditional professional life unsuitable for them. The novel's protagonist, John, is a middle-class family guy. He is twenty-six years old, yet he is usually depressed. After studying Computer Science at Berkley University, he earned a Computer Programmer Executer position in a Nuclear Research organization in San Francisco. Computers were one of the most popular items in the world around the turn of the twentieth century. People have always been enthralled by new devices such as computers, telephones, radios, and automobiles. According to the era's fashion, the novel's hero also studied Computer Science.

The work opens with the young protagonist, John, solitary and concludes with his isolation. The failure, anxieties, insults, and alienation of John are evident from the story's opening. Because he could not discover anything beneficial in his life, John's persona embodies nihilism. He had no idea why he was alive in the first place. Janet Hayakawa is a pivotal female figure in this story. Her family moved to Canada after emigrating from Japan. She, like John, remained alone in her flat. She, too, is dedicated to her career and used drumming to distract herself from her troubles.

John and Jane were in love, but they had to break up. They remained buddies after they split up. John felt alone since his mother never took the time to show him attention. Women in the twentieth century sought careers, yet only a few successfully balanced work and family life. However, like John's mother, other women could only do the official job and not care for their families. As a result, they failed to provide attention, care, and love to their children. John's mother likewise abandoned him and went looking for work, showing little compassion for him. Naturally, John, who lacked his mother's devotion, struggled to fit in with the rest of society. This might be one of the reasons behind Jane and John's split. Even before they married, they had been living together. In California, modern culture accepts this form of unlawful bond. Their romance did not last for long, so they ended it and chose to keep in touch as good friends. This was California's socio-cultural existence, and a nation like India would never allow

a couple to live together without a genuine family link.

John lost his namesake-related mother after his mother died. He addressed letters to his father, who lived in Kent and rarely replied. As a result, he yearned for love, affection, and a best friend. So he went to ice cream parlours and restaurants only to look at the couples and other people who came with their friends and associates. This illustrates the restaurant culture of the twentieth century and those who are enamoured with the finer things in life and frequent restaurants. Jane and John went to a restaurant, spoke about their everyday lives, and spent some time together while waiting for their dinner.

Advertisements abound in the twentieth century, and individuals may see them wherever they go. It was erected on both sides of the highway. The slogans diverted drivers, and accidents were common. The author mentions some of the commercial phrases, such as "Hark for Jesus," "The President is a Lesbian Spy," and "Nuke the Nukes," which caught the attention of drivers and caused them to detour from their intended course. Due to traffic, John could not get to work on time, and higher authorities frequently reprimanded him for his tardiness. The author wanted to portray California as it was, and he did so honestly.

Jane's advertising on John received 84 responses, indicating that the females were impressed by its promotion rather than by John's genuine character. John chose three letters from the 84 answers. He met three females and talked with them before deciding that none was suitable for him. After that, he went through everything again and chose the seventh letter; he was fascinated by Liz's handwriting and wanted to see her. She finished her legal studies. John was only interested in seeing Liz because of her handwriting, and he did not care whether or not her character was exemplary for him. As a result, the yuppies are unsure about what they should be paying attention to.

Liz's family was Italian immigrants who arrived in California after WWII. Her father, Mr Dorati, and mother, Mrs Dorati, had a vineyard property, and Vikram Seth represented farmer culture via this property. Liz has a brother Ed and a sister Sue. Liz's family exhibited both Californian and

Italian culture at the same time. John and Liz met often, and their intimacy grew as a result; eventually, they began to live a life known as 'living together.' Yuppies are well-known for leading this lifestyle. They place little value on marriage and its ceremonies, preferring to live their lives immediately after meeting their ideal mate. They have little regard for legal rights, and they share their bed illegally before being legally married. This culture of living together is the most prevalent in the twentieth century, particularly in Western countries.

Seth introduces both central and peripheral individuals in each gathering scene, each with its motive, context, and point of view. Their viewpoints enrich the understanding of readers who are familiar with this culture. The reader will like the party scene since it is realistically depicted. Liz and John throw a housewarming party, the first and most important celebration.

The Golden Gate's first two sections introduced Janet, John, and Liz and quickly depicted their quest for a lifemate and the realization of that search. The lives of Phil Weiss, his absent spouse Claire Cabot, their kid Paul, and their associates are depicted in the third chapter, including 37 verses. Every figure connected to Phil and Claire reflected San Francisco's socio-cultural life. The novel's final ten lines showed the ups and downs of the main protagonists' lives. Phil assumed entire responsibility for his motherless son's upbringing, and he frequently read him stories and acted as a mother. Phil is a true patriot and a wonderful human being since he purposefully quit his employment to help the general people. He, too, has been handsomely compensated as a yuppie in the nuclear atomic realm. On the other hand, Phil could not keep his work after learning about the nuclear atom's evil potential, even though he was paid well. The third chapter demonstrates how the younger generation may use their electronic and computer expertise to construct and destroy the entire planet. Phil understands that the good work he has done for humanity may end up causing a global calamity. As a result, he resigned from his prestigious job at the nuclear atomic firm. Phil worked for Datatronics, and the author uses the brand new firm Datatronics, founded in 1971 in California and manufactures aerospace custom magnetizes, military custom magnetizes, and other

products. Thousands of young people were employed by this firm in the 1970s. Even now, this firm publicly welcomes young people to assist them in producing advanced scientific goods, and it also clearly fits the candidates' qualifying conditions. Thus, even though the twenty-first-century world is brimming with computer and electronics graduates, this firm publicly invites them to join them.

Phil worked for Dataronics without realizing the dangers of radiation and nuclear weapons. He resigned his work and protested against nuclear weapons after learning about the effects of radiation from nuclear weapons. Phil stated that he and his pals were rejoicing since they were still alive when they participated in the olive-picking event. According to him, it indicated that they had survived radioactivity, terrorism, nuclear war, and other manufactured calamities. As a result, he chastised society by praising their ability to survive in the world.

During the Global Wars, the world witnessed the stern face of nuclear weapons with frightened eyes. During the World Wars, America used the most helpful scientific technology as the most fantastic equipment. America has twisted this severe weapon twice to destroy the identity and existence of the magnificent country of Japan. In the year 1945, there were two significant nuclear weapons strikes. On August 6th, 1945, a nuclear bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, and on August 9th, 1945, another nuclear bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, another historic city. The entire world came to a halt when they saw America's illegal behaviour, and the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are still suffering the consequences of the bombing. Nearly 1,30,000 people died due to the explosion, and tens of thousands more are currently suffering from medical illnesses due to the radiation.

The United Kingdom and the United States have agreed to collaborate on scientific and technological development. According to the Quebec Agreement, America had a key part in World War II since it created and utilized the most terrible nuclear weapons. They had both spent a lot of time and effort inventing sophisticated devices to demonstrate that they were the world's most powerful nation. The United Kingdom backed and supplied the United States with everything to develop nuclear weapons.

In America, young people with technological expertise aspired to demonstrate their scientific abilities. They felt that atomic energy businesses would improve their living standards. In reality, the government has misled the youth under the guise of science. Many young boys and girls became involved in manufacturing nuclear weapons without realizing the consequences. America had developed two types of bombs, each containing two different elements: uranium and plutonium. As a result, the young people decided to study and develop something new. Vikram Seth depicts how nuclear weapons scare young people and cause them to abandon their scientific pursuits. People were opposed to science and technology only due to the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings. Scientists like Phil have even resigned from jobs that pay well. Naturally, when a person loses his work, he experiences mental stress, which causes him to despise the country's whole heritage, culture, and every beneficial element. Unemployment has expanded worldwide, and Phil's character has portrayed their hardships and sorrows. Phil resigned from his work, but he also spoke against nuclear weapons. He began to strive for the nation's peace. Phil made the public aware of nuclear weapons production's dangers and the need to live in a nuclear-free world. He planned to eliminate the terrible Lungless Labs, where the world's nuclear weapons were created. John supported nuclear weapons and attempted but failed to persuade Phil. Liz supplied Phil with all legal assistance as he led the kids in a demonstration against nuclear weapons and other horrifying scientific creations. Phil had already mentally prepared himself to face any challenges and was even willing to prison. He issued an appeal to all philanthropists to help preserve the earth. Liz spoke at the awareness gathering and gave an excellent presentation on the subject. Phil was caught, and during his detention, he was more concerned about Paul than about his freedom.

The entire youthful community did not accept Phil and Liz's ideas, and others like John demonstrated their opposition to the anti-nuclear society. John believed that the country should progress at the same time as technology. Phil, according to John, was doing the country a disservice. John attacks Phil, claiming that his attack on Lab is unjust because he is in charge of the

government and the courts. Even though Phil and John are both technophiles, they have opposing viewpoints. Liz was a staunch supporter of Phil, which appeared to be the source of John and Liz's misunderstanding. Vikram Seth reveals California's social activity via the perspectives of its youth. Young people were responsible for defending their society, and Phil, the most responsible of them all, wanted to defend their homeland and culture. As a result, the novel's central theme and theme, anti-nuclear civilization, has been successfully represented via the lives of Yippies.

The Golden Gate is a powerful reminder to the rest of the world that a society's socio-culture starts at home. A kid must be raised under the supervision and care of their parents, and parents must keep track of their psychological development. According to child psychology, parents are responsible for raising their children. They should chastise their children for doing bad things, support them for doing good things, manage their undesirable cravings, teach them the importance of society, and be a role model for their children. If the parents fail to do so, the children will not understand the worth of their lives and will become alienated from society. *The Golden Gate* portrays every character as a member of society, and these individuals realistically convey today's concerns and challenges. They emphasize earning more money to enjoy a contemporary life, but they fail to spend time with their family. The author explains the reasons for the divorce and aloofness straightforwardly. He demonstrates that the contemporary man is obsessed with sophisticated living. He may get addicted to contemporary technologies such as the iPhone, iPad, internet, and other ultra-modern devices, as well as a lavish lifestyle. This desire for a more refined lifestyle causes them to lose touch with their family, and as a result, they wind up sitting alone without their loved ones.

Conclusion

In the novel *The Golden Gate*, Vikram Seth picturizes that a person's addiction to sex, science, and consumerism leads to a gap in the world. Moreover, Vikram Seth's socio-culture of twentieth-century California demonstrates that humans must have compassion, patriotism, a creative intellect, and

humanity. The novel's topic of homosexuality, nuclear weapons, parties, divorce, answering machines, advertisement culture, and restaurant culture perfectly portrays the Yippie socio-culture in California.

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